

Message Text

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ACTION LAB-04

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 KUWAIT 1123

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TAGS: ILO ELAB KU
SUBJECT: ILO ACTIVITIES IN KUWAIT

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1. CONTRARY TO ITS WORLDWIDE ORGANIZATION INTO REGIONAL OFFICES, THE ILO HAS ESTABLISHED A COUNTRY OFFICE IN KUWAIT HEADED BY MR. M.E. DEFRAWI. THE SCOPE OF ILO ACTIVITIES DOES NOT SEEM TO WARRANT SUCH SINGULAR REPRESENTATION. THE GOK PROHIBITS ANY FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S NASCENT AND CLOSELY CONTROLLED LABOR MOVEMENT. THE ILO'S SINGLE MAJOR FUNCTION IN THE LAST TWO YEARS HAS BEEN TO ADMINISTER THE UNDP-FUNDED SHUWAIKH INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTER. SEVERAL SOURCES WITHIN THE UNDP ADMINISTRATION IN KUWAIT HAVE EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT OVER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ILO COUNTRY OFFICE HERE. HOWEVER, GOK OFFICIALS HAVE IN THE PAST EXPRESSED TO EMB-OFFS DESIRE TO UPGRADE ILO OFFICE IN KUWAIT TO A REGIONAL OFFICE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENTIRE GULF. GOK REASONING IS THAT LIMITED POPULATION MAKES REGIONAL ACTIVITIES BY ILO MORE VIABLE. GOK ALSO DESIRES STEPPED UP ILO ACTIVITIES IN ARAB COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY POOR ONES, WHICH COULD BE FUNDED BY WEALTHY ARAB STATES. KUWAIT'S INTEREST PROBABLY RELATES TO ITS RESUMPTION OF POSITION AS SOLE ARAB MEMBER

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OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE ILO.

2. THE SHUWAIKH INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTER IS AN UNDP FUNDED/ILO EXECUTED PROJECT DESIGNED TO PROVIDE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO KUWAITI CITIZENS. IT MUST BE REITERATED HERE THAT KUWAITIS FORM ONLY 45 PERCENT OF PRESENT POPULATION; CONSEQUENTLY THE NATIVE, AS OPPOSED TO THE EXPATRIATE,

LABOR POOL IS RATHER SMALL. THE TRAINING PROGRAM, WHICH IS CAPABLE OF INSTRUCTING 500 INDIVIDUALS AT ANY ONE TIME, HAS BEEN RUNNING AT ABOUT 80 PERCENT OF CAPACITY SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1970. THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTER PROJECT ENDED OFFICIALLY AS OF 12-31-76. PROJECT ACTIVITIES ARE PRESENTLY BEING CONTINUED UNDER A "FUNDS-IN-TRUST" ARRANGEMENT WITH THE KUWAITI GOVERNMENT ON AN AD HOC BASIS PENDING FINALIZATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROJECT-TO-BE ENTITLED THE "NATIONAL INDUSTRIES TRAINING PROGRAM".

3. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS KEYED TO THE FORMAT OUTLINED IN REFTEL B.

A. OBJECTIVES - TO PROVIDE KUWAIT WITH A POOL OF SKILLED KUWAITI WORKERS. THE INITIAL INSTRUCTION AREAS WERE SHEET METAL WORK AND WELDING; ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS, REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE; AND AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEMS, REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE; AND THEY HAVE SINCE BEEN EXPANDED TO OTHER CATEGORIES NOTED BELOW. KUWAIT'S CONTINUING SHORTAGE OF SKILLED LABOR HAS EASED THE ENTRY OF THE TRAINEES INTO THE LABOR FORCE. THE GOK TAKEOVER OF FUNDING IN 1974 AND ITS INTENTION TO EXPAND THE PROGRAM INTO ONE OF NATIONAL SCOPE AS THE "NATIONAL INDUSTRIES TRAINING PROGRAM" SUGGESTS THAT THE GOK ATTACHES SOME IMPORTANCE TO THE PROGRAM. DELAY IN THE ADOPTION/PUBLICATION OF KUWAIT'S 1976-1981 NATIONAL FIVE YEAR PLAN PRECLUDES COMMENT ON HOW TRAINING FITS IN WITH THE PLAN. IN GENERAL TERMS, GOK ENVISAGES BOTH EXPANSION OF CURRENT TRAINING CENTER AND CREATION OF NEW ONES. LATTER WILL ENTAIL NEW TRAINING CENTERS IN FOLLOWING AREAS: PETROCHEMICAL, CLERICAL AND UNCLASSIFIED

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SECRETARIAL, PRINTING AND PUBLISHING, SUPERVISORY TRAINING, INDUSTRIAL TRAINING. EVENTUAL GOAL WOULD BE TO COORDINATE OUTPUT AMONG THESE OLD AND NEW CENTERS TO TRAIN ENOUGH KUWAITI SKILLED MANPOWER TO LESSEN RELIANCE ON FOREIGNERS IN KEY SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY. FIGURES SHOW THAT CURRENT OUTPUT WOULD BE INSUFFICIENT TO MEET TOTAL KUWAITI REQUIREMENTS IN MOST SKILL CATEGORIES. GIVEN COUNTRY'S LABOR SHORTAGE, TRAINING SEEMS ENTIRELY APPROPRIATE, ONLY PROBLEM BEING TO GET AFFLUENT KUWAITIS TO PURSUE TRAINING IN FIELDS THEY FEEL ARE BENEATH THEM. RAPID EXPANSION OF ECONOMY MAKES UTILIZATION OF THOSE TRAINED NOT RPT NOT A PROBLE.

B. TRIPARTISM - WORKER ORGANIZATIONS AND EMPLOYERS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH EITHER THE DESIGN OR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT. REVIEWED BY THE GOK, THE SHUWAIKH INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTER WAS FORMULATED UNDER THE UNDP COUNTRY PROGRAM AND IMPLEMENTED BY THE ILO. WORKER ORGANIZATIONS ARE TIGHTLY CONTROLLED IN KUWAIT. LACK OF WORKER OR EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS IN PROJECT IS NOT A MAJOR

WEAKNESS.

C. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT - THE SHUWAIKH PROJECT HAS BEEN FUNDED FROM TWO SOURCES, THE UNDP (\$628,900) AND THE GOK (IN A "FUNDS-IN-TRUST" ARRANGEMENT AMOUNTING TO \$3,513,012). THE UNDP ASSISTANCE CEASED IN 1974 UPON THE REQUEST OF THE GOK. TECHNICAL SUPPORT INVOLVED EIGHT EXPERTS, WHICH AMOUNTED TO 216 MAN-MONTHS, AND VARIOUS CONSULTANTS, WHICH TOTALLED 72 MAN-MONTHS. EQUIPMENT COSTS CAME TO \$50,000. TOTAL FUNDING BY THE GOK HAS RENDERED ACADEMIC ANY QUESTION CONCERNING FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, OR SUPPORTING FUNDS. THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SHUWAIKH PROJECT IS THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR.

D. SUCCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION - PROJECT SUCCESS, EVEN AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PROJECT DIRECTOR, W.E. CHURCHWARD, HAS BEEN DIFFICULT TO ASSESS. TRAINING GOALS FOR EACH PARTICULAR SKILL TRACK ARE MET BY THE END OF TRAINING.

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FIGURES ON NUMBER OF TRAINEES INDICATE THAT THE SHUWAIKH CENTER WILL FURNISH BY 1980/81 ONLY 30 PERCENT OF KUWAIT'S TOTAL REQUIREMENTS IN THE SKILL CATEGORIES IN WHICH IT PROVIDES TRAINING, UNLESS PLANNED EXPANSION TAKES PLACE. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DETERMINE AT PRESENT WHETHER THOSE ACTUALLY TRAINED BY THE CENTER ARE (OR WILL BE) FILLING THE REQUIREMENTS OF KUWAITI ECONOMY. SOME KUWAITI TRAINEES NO DOUBT TAKE OTHER, MORE LUCRATIVE JOBS AS SALESMEN, ETC., LEAVING THE SKILLED OCCUPATIONS FOR WHICH THEY WERE TRAINED TO EXPATRIATE WORKERS. MIGRATION OF TRAINED KUWAITIS TO HIGHER-PAYING JOBS IN THE LOWER GULF (OR INDEED TO EUROPE OR THE U.S.), THOUGH NOT AS LIKELY AS OUT-MIGRATION BY EXPATRIATES, IS ALSO A POSSIBILITY.

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4. TWO PROJECTS ARE PLANNED FOR 1977: A) A THREE YEAR PROJECT TO BEGIN IN JULY 1977, DESIGNED TO HELP COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES. FOR ONE YEAR, AN EXPERT WILL HOLD TRAINING COURSES IN COOPERATIVE SOCIETY MANAGEMENT FOR MEMBER SOCIETIES AND WILL DEVELOP REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS AND NEW PROCEDURES. MEMBERS WILL THEN BE SENT, ON A TWO-PER-YEAR BASIS, TO SCANDINAVIA AND TO ENGLAND FOR FURTHER TRAINING. B) AN INTER-REGIONAL STUDY COURSE ON LABOR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY, TO BE HELD IN GENEVA AND KUWAIT FEBRUARY-MARCH, 1977, OPEN TO 20-30 PERSONS HOLDING RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS IN THEIR ARAB AND ASIAN COUNTRIES. COURSE IS DESIGNED TO CONSIDER FOLLOWING ISSUES: MIGRATION, LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION.

5. ILO ACTIVITY NO. 2 LISTED IN REFTEL C DOES NOT EXIST SO FAR AS WE KNOW. AS MENTIONED IN PARA 1 ABOVE, THE ONLY ILO ACTIVITY IN KUWAIT AT PRESENT TIME IS THE SHUWAIKH TRAINING CENTER. STARTING DATE LISTED REFTEL C SUGGESTS THAT ACTIVITY NO. 2 WAS PILOT PROJECT FOR SHUWAIKH TRAINING CENTER.

6. IN REPLY TO PARA 4 REFTEL C., ILO MISSION ON LABOR LEGISLATION STANDARDS HAS HAD NO RPT NO, PERCEPTIBLE IMPACT. BASIC KUWAIT LABOR LEGISLATION DRAWNN UP IN MID-1960'S AND EARLY 1970'S HAS NOT CHANGED SINCE. LEGISLATION COVERS ASSOCIATIONS, WORKING CONDITIONS, COMPENSATION FOR INJURY, UNCLASSIFIED

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AND INDUSTRIAL SAFETY.

7. RE RURAL SECTOR DEVELOPMENT IN KUWAIT, ILO ACTIVITIES HERE HAVE BEEN CONCERNED WITH INDUSTRIAL TRAINING, SO RELEVANCE TO RURAL SECTOR WOULD BE LIMITED TO THOSE SKILLS WHICH CAN BE UTILIZED BY RURAL AS WELL AS INDUSTRIAL WORKERS. GOK INTEREST IN PROMOTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT IS JUSTIFIABLY MINIMAL. ONLY ONE PERCENT OF GNP IS DERIVED FROM AGRICULTURE, AND ONLY 2.5 PERCENT OF WORK FORCE IS IN AGRICULTURE/ANIMAL HUSBANDRY SECTORS OF ECONOMY. CURRENT LACK OF CONCERN IS A REFLECTION OF PAST GOK SUCCESS IN SETTLING BEDOUINS IN TOWN AND ENCOURAGING EMPLOYMENT IN NON-AGRICULTURAL SECTORS.
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